



# Program Guide

North Carolina's  
Interdisciplinary Parent Representation  
(IPR) Program

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## **Summary**

The Office of the Parent Defender (OPD) is a state-wide public defender office that provides and promotes high quality legal representation for parents with an abuse, neglect, or dependency (A/N/D) court case.

In 2022, OPD launched its Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program. OPD is partnering with NC's Court Improvement Program to bring this model of parent representation to North Carolina. Additionally, a Program Advisory Committee with representatives from county child welfare agencies, the NC Division of Social Services, county and state Guardian ad Litem (GAL), parent attorneys, judges, and individuals with personal experience with the system meets regularly to support the successful implementation of the IPR Program.

Attorneys participating in the IPR Program can apply for the services of an independent and experienced social worker to work with the attorney in the representation of a parent. If criteria are met, the IPR Program Manager, an employee of the OPD, assigns a contract social worker to the case. Once the parent consents to the IPR Program's services, the social worker becomes part of the legal defense team as a "Nonlawyer Assistant" under Rule 5.3 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct.

The attorney and social worker comprise an interdisciplinary team that enhances the legal representation for parents involved in an A/N/D case. Social workers help promote parent engagement, understanding of the A/N/D process, and connection to services tailored to the individual needs of the parent.

### **IPR Program Mission**

The mission of the IPR Program is to defend the rights of parents navigating the A/N/D system in North Carolina by providing holistic, high-quality representation through zealous legal advocacy in and out of court coupled with strengths-based, compassionate, and comprehensive social work services.

### **Purpose of the Program Guide**

This guide is intended to provide information for counties interested in participating and already participating in the IPR Program. Due to the collaborative nature of the IPR program, it is important that this resource be available not only to the attorneys and social workers participating in the program but the court partners that will be impacted by the program, including judges, county child welfare agency attorneys and staff, and GAL program attorneys, staff, and volunteers.

## **Becoming an IPR Program County**

Parent attorneys interested in participating in the IPR Program should review the IPR Application (see [Appendix A](#)) and decide which attorney will be responsible for completing the application and obtaining the necessary signatures. Once the application is completed and all signatures are obtained, it is submitted via email to Parent Defender, Wendy Sotolongo, [Wendy.C.Sotolongo@nccourts.org](mailto:Wendy.C.Sotolongo@nccourts.org).

The application will be reviewed by the OPD's Parent Defender and IPR Program Manager. They will consult with the IPR Program Advisory Committee about the application and solicit comments and recommendations about the application. Thereafter, the OPD will make the decision to accept, defer, or deny the application and notify the contact attorney of the decision.

Upon acceptance into the IPR program, the following occurs:

1. Parent attorneys wanting to participate in the IPR Program enter a contract with Indigent Defense Services (IDS).
2. The IPR Program Manager recruits and hires social workers to enter a contract with IDS.
3. Two trainings are scheduled:
  - a. A one-hour webinar presented by the OPD. Invitees include judges, county child welfare agency attorneys and staff, and GAL program attorneys, staff, and volunteers. This webinar will provide an overview of the IPR Program, facilitate discussion about the program, and establish expectations (e.g., sharing of information, role clarity).
  - b. A two-hour in-person meeting between the parent attorneys and contract social workers participating in the IPR program. This training is aimed at supporting the successful collaboration necessary to assist clients served by the program. This training will be recorded for viewing by attorneys or social workers who subsequently join the program.

## **Becoming an IPR Program Social Worker**

Experienced social workers interested in becoming an IPR Program social worker should submit a cover letter, a resume, and a list of three professional references via email to the IPR Program Manager, Sharice Zachary, MSW, at [Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org](mailto:Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org). Selected applicants will be interviewed for open positions. If selected, the social worker enters a contract with Indigent Defense Services.

IPR contract social workers are independent contractors, not employees. IPR contract social workers receive no benefits and are not entitled to unemployment insurance, retirement, or workers' compensation benefits. IPR contract social workers are responsible for paying all applicable employment taxes and income taxes resulting from the contract. Additionally, all IPR contract social workers are required to maintain professional liability insurance throughout their employment with the program.

The IPR contract social workers will bill monthly for up to 40 hours per week. Any time over 40 hours must receive prior approval from the IPR Program Manager. Upon certification of the reported data at the beginning of each month, IDS will pay the IPR contract social worker for all hours reported the previous month. The IPR contract social workers will be reimbursed for assignment-related expenses, based on current IDS billing policies. Additionally, they will be reimbursed for mileage, both intra- county and inter-county, at the current mileage rate established by IDS.

## Supervision of IPR Social Workers

IPR Program social workers have two types of supervision.

1. The IPR Program Manager provides programmatic supervision through monitoring caseloads, supporting the consistency of services, and providing professional development.
2. The attorney representing the parent provides day to day supervision. In the representation of a client, the IPR social worker is considered a "Nonlawyer Assistant" under Rule 5.3 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct and the appointed attorney is the supervisor of the assigned IPR social worker. The attorney maintains sole discretion in determining the social worker's roles and duties provided to the client. Regular communication between the attorney and the social worker about the client's case is required. If the attorney withdraws from the case, or the case is concluded, the social worker cannot continue to work on that case.

## Applying for IPR Social Worker Services

When they wish to have a social worker assigned to a case, participating parent attorneys should explain the IPR Program's services to the parent. If the parent is interested, the attorney submits an Application for Social Work Services (see [Appendix B](#)) to the IPR Program Manager. The IPR Program Manager will assign social workers on a case-by-case basis after weighing parent needs and current available social work resources. Priority will be given to cases in which:

- Neglect or dependency is alleged;
- The primary or concurrent plan is reunification; and
- The request is made within 90 days of the filing of the petition.

Note: Cases involving allegations of abuse will be considered for IPR services on a case-by-case basis if neglect or dependency is also an allegation.

## Case Assignment Process

See [Appendix C](#), "Case Assignment Step-by-Step," for a visual of the case assignment process. Once the IPR Program Manager receives an Application for Social Work Services and attachments (petition and any orders), and the case is accepted for assignment, the IPR Program Manager makes a provisional IPR social worker assignment. The IPR Program Manager will send a case assignment email to the IPR social worker and the attorney (see [Appendix D](#)). Via email, the IPR social worker confirms that there are no known conflicts and that they are accepting the case. Once the IPR social worker confirms acceptance, the following occurs (see [Appendix E](#) for Assignment Checklist):

1. The attorney lets the client know that the IPR social worker will be contacting them. The attorney also clarifies that services are voluntary and declining to participate in the program will not impact the attorney-client relationship.
2. Within 5 business days, the assigned IPR social worker meets with the client and obtains written consent for IPR services (see [Appendix F](#)), discusses the client's goals for the case, and obtains a release of information for the child welfare agency and other relevant providers/records (see [Appendix G](#)).
3. The assigned IPR social worker emails written consent for IPR services to the IPR Program Manager and attorney.
4. The attorney files and serves the Notice of Assignment (see [Appendix H](#)).
5. The attorney and IPR social worker meet for the initial case staffing.

## Duties and Roles

### IPR Program Attorney

The success of the IPR Program depends in large part on the participating attorneys. IPR Program attorneys are expected to provide high quality representation through zealous legal advocacy in and out of court. Specific expectations include the following:

- Communicate with each client at least monthly, preferably in-person and outside of the courthouse.
- Ensure that language translation services and other accommodations for equal access and full participation in all processes are available to the client at all stages of the A/N/D case.
- Thoroughly prepare for and attend all court hearings, by obtaining discovery, obtaining and reviewing reports from the client's service providers, and filing appropriate motions.
- Thoroughly prepare the client for each court hearing, explain the process, and debrief after the court hearing to make sure the client understands the results.
- Regularly ask each client what would be most helpful for their case, what is working, and whether there is any service or arrangement that is not helpful, and why. Advocate in and out of court for appropriate updates to the case service plan/court ordered requirements.
- Supervise the IPR social worker through regular communication and discussion of each client in the IPR Program.

*Source: ACF, 2017, pp. 13-14*

### IPR Program Social Worker

IPR social workers play a vital role in interdisciplinary representation. Throughout the representation, the IPR social worker is committed to advocating for the parent's expressed interests. The following are some of the duties and roles of IPR social workers.

#### A. Parent Support

- Encourage and motivate the parent to participate in their case plan.
- Provide information to the parent about the court proceedings and agency procedures.
- Assist in locating court ordered services.
- Assist in locating and obtaining concrete resources (furniture, rent money, clothing, etc.).

#### B. Interviewing and Investigation

- Conduct interviews with the parent to assess overall family and individual functioning.
- Assist the attorney in locating and assessing alternative placement options, if appropriate.
- Assist the client in preparing for home studies.
- Observing visits. This does not include supervising visits. It does include preparing parents prior to visits and debriefing with them afterwards.
- Review case files/discovery.
- Assist the attorney in contacting service providers.
- Research agency policies and procedures.

#### C. Parent Advocate

- Advocate for the parent in community settings, such as foster care reviews, and treatment planning and other agency meetings.
- Maintain contact with the parent and reassess service needs throughout the court case.
- Maintain contact with the agency child welfare worker to ensure services and referrals are being provided.
- Maintain contact with the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) regarding the parent's progress.
- Gain comprehensive knowledge of resources from private and public services systems, including programs dealing with parenting, mental health, substance use, public assistance, housing, and

- interpersonal violence.
- Assist attorneys in understanding mental health and other social service aspects of the case.
- Collaborate with community and state agencies to effectively help parents/clients achieve their goals.

See [Appendix I](#) for IPR Social Worker Contract Announcement.

## **Relationships between IPR Social Workers and Parent Attorneys**

Social workers are considered agents of the appointed attorney and are professionally responsible to that attorney. In legal standards, the social worker is considered a nonlawyer assistant and is required to adhere to the Rules of Professional Conduct in this role (see [Appendix J](#)).

The attorney is responsible for ensuring competent supervision of the IPR social worker through regular communication and staffing about each client in the IPR Program. The attorney should ensure that the IPR social worker:

- Receives copies of all the court and collateral documents in a client's case.
- Has a clear understanding of the expectations of the attorney regarding the IPR social worker's services.
- Is regularly meeting with clients and communicating with their support and service system providers (i.e., treatment providers, teachers, agency child welfare workers).
- Is participating in case planning, family group decision-making, and other meetings a client may have with the county child welfare agency.

As an agent of the appointed attorney, the attorney should ensure that the IPR social worker understands and adheres to the legal standard of privileged communication. The only possible exception to privileged communication is when it conflicts with North Carolina's mandated reporting statute. This is something that should be discussed in advance of starting to work with clients, including consideration of the kinds of cases that may put these two standards in conflict. For more on Privileged Communication, see [Appendix K](#).

IPR social workers should maintain an independent and professional approach to each case, adhering to social work ethical practice standards. Social workers should provide insight and assessment of progress and challenges of each case to the appointed parent attorney on a regular basis and understand that any information provided can be used for legal purposes.

To the extent possible, IPR social workers are not to be called as witnesses, because the goal of using an IPR social worker is to move a case forward toward successful outcomes. Testifying can be a barrier to this goal. IPR social workers are a limited resource and using social worker time to testify reduces the time they can do other work on the case and can negatively impact the social worker's relationship with the client.

Instead of being called as a witness, IPR social workers share information with the parent attorney and the attorney determines how to use the information in court.

## **Relationships between IPR Social Workers and Parents**

IPR social workers should inform parents that social worker services are voluntary, and they can discontinue them at any time. Social workers should meet with parents regularly and focus on progress and challenges in completing court ordered services. Social workers should assist parents in addressing any barriers to making progress including providing resources, helping them solve problems, and acting as a liaison to other partners in the case.

IPR social workers need to obtain informed consent from parents that includes clear roles and responsibilities, attorney/client privilege, purpose of social worker services, mandated reporting, voluntary status, termination of services, and client rights. See [Appendix F](#) for written consent for IPR services.

IPR social workers should also obtain signed release of information forms for any entity they want to obtain information from or share information with. Parents need to know that social workers will share any and all case information provided by the county child welfare agency, GAL, and other professionals with the parent attorney after a release of information is signed. See [Appendix G](#) for a sample release of information form.

## **Relationships between IPR Social Workers and Others**

Because social workers will have many different activities as part of the parent’s legal defense team, they will have to interact and collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders. Each stakeholder organization will likely have their own policies, procedures, and understanding of the social worker’s role. It is vital to set clear expectations before beginning work on any case. Guidelines will help social workers establish clear expectations and boundaries with partners.

The relationship between IPR social workers and other social workers and service providers can be challenging. Each provider has their own lens through which they see the case, and this can cause challenges in collaboration. It is important to establish clear lines of communication and discuss issues that may arise with role clarity and boundaries.

IPR social workers should reach out to all service providers and others involved in the court case as soon as possible after being assigned a case and clarify who they represent and how their role fits within the case. This includes the county child welfare agency worker, the GAL, all treatment providers, and any other collaborative support service provider involved in the case.

It is important the IPR social worker communicates that they are: 1) an agent of the parent attorney and are primarily responsible to that attorney; and 2) bound by both the legal rules and social work ethics regarding privileged communication and client confidentiality. The initial contact should clarify procedures about sharing and releasing information and exchanging necessary consents or releases.

IPR social workers should communicate that their primary role is to help the parent achieve their expressed goals. Usually, the goal is reunification and the IPR social worker will help the parent access court ordered services that will enable the parent to provide a safe home for their child/children. Generally, it is the court’s expectation that the county child welfare agency, IPR social workers, and others will collaborate to work out any issues (e.g., which provider the parent utilizes for a specific service).

While challenges can arise with any partner, it is crucial that the relationships with county child welfare agency workers are prioritized, and any conflicts quickly addressed. Outcomes are more likely to be



successful when positive relationships are built early on and maintained even when not working on a specific case.

## **Mandated Reporting**

The attorney-client privilege and the NASW's Code of Ethics regarding privacy and confidentiality may come in conflict with NC's mandated reporting statute N.C.G.S. §7B-301. The potential conflict is one that must be addressed in advance between the social worker and the attorney. While this may come up in practice infrequently, having a plan of how to handle the situation is necessary.

According to the NASW, there are several models to consider that can help provide structure to the social worker-attorney relationship and can help prevent or address these potential conflicts. Two of those models are:

- **The "confidentiality wall" model:** This model was used by at least two law clinics and requires an initial screening by the lawyer to rule out child maltreatment issues before involving the social worker as a team member. Reportable child abuse or neglect information that the social worker obtains directly may still need to be reported; however, the probability of a need to report is reduced by the initial screening. Using this model requires the lawyer and social worker to talk about these potential issues on a case-by-case basis.
- **The "notice" model:** In this approach, parents/clients are given notice of social workers' reporting obligations before social work services are offered as an option.

Attorneys and social workers participating in the IPR Program are expected to use a combination of the confidentiality wall and notice models. Before applying for an IPR social worker, attorneys should consider whether the client's case may present an issue of mandated reporting. Additionally, the IPR social worker must explain mandated reporting requirements when meeting with the parent to secure their Consent to IPR services. If an IPR social worker makes a mandated report, that information shall be communicated to the client and the attorney at the earliest point possible. The attorney must then initiate discussion with the client regarding further work on the case by the social worker and/or attorney.

For more on mandated reporting, please refer to [Appendix L](#), "NC Mandated Reporting Law."

*Source: NASW, 2008*

## **Program Management**

### **Supervision Standards**

Supervision means something different for social workers and lawyers. Supervision for lawyers is typically focused on expectations, monitoring, and evaluation of performance. In addition, supervising lawyers promote professional development by creating an "environment that supports the individual attorney's efforts to continually develop throughout his or her career," while also establishing "a clear expectation that the attorneys are responsible for their own professional development and growth" (Zehren, 2009).

According to the NASW, social work supervision is defined as "the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in which the responsibility and accountability for the development of competence, demeanor, and ethical practice take place. The supervisor is responsible for providing direction to the supervisee, who applies social work theory, standardized knowledge, skills, competency, and applicable ethical

content in the practice setting. The supervisor and the supervisee both share responsibility for carrying out their role in this collaborative process” (NASW, 2013).

Social work supervision is divided into three categories:

2. Administrative: The most similar to legal supervision and focuses on a supervisee’s level of functioning in their current work assignment, through regular monitoring and oversight. See [Appendix M](#) for Suggested Supervision Guidelines related to social worker contract hour distribution, caseload standards, and caseload considerations.
3. Educational: Similar to professional development for lawyers but is more specifically focused on learning through current caseload experiences. The goal is supervisees become more self-aware and refine their knowledge and skills by understanding their interactions with specific cases. See [Appendix N](#) for Suggested Training.
4. Supportive: The nature of the work continually exposes social workers to challenging, complex and often upsetting situations. High levels of burnout and secondary trauma are a leading cause of turnover in the field. For these reasons social workers need supportive supervision that provides a nurturing and safe environment for workers to focus on their own reactions, needs and strategies for self-care.

*Source: NASW, 2013*

IDS employs a social worker as the program manager for the IPR Program. This individual provides educational and supportive supervision and administrative oversight to IPR social workers. Parent attorneys provide administrative supervision to the IPR social worker assigned to their cases.

## **Learning Community Sessions and Professional Development**

Interdisciplinary work with parent attorneys and other court partners will be a different experience for most social workers, especially those who previously worked at a county DSS agency. The IPR Program is committed to creating opportunities for IPR social workers to collaborate and connect with one another and to provide opportunities for professional growth.

The IPR Program Manager leads regular Learning Community Sessions with required attendance by all IPR social workers. During these sessions, topics within social work (i.e. substance use, incarcerated parents, interpersonal violence) will be discussed to include the most recent policy and/or practice updates. Other professional development opportunities are provided to IPR social workers through regular county visits from the IPR Program Manager. Additionally, the IPR Program Manager provides information on professional development opportunities via Webinar, local, and national conferences.

## **Evaluation of Program Outcome Goals**

When implemented in other jurisdictions, interdisciplinary representation has had favorable outcomes, including reducing time in foster care, expediting permanency, and enhancing parental engagement in the judicial process. North Carolina’s IPR Program includes a data collection and analysis component to measure differences in interdisciplinary parent representation and traditional parent representation.

IPR attorneys and social workers are responsible for reporting data about their cases monthly.

Data collected includes:

- Timelines, such as date of adjudication, disposition, permanency planning hearings
- Outcomes, such as reunification, guardianship, or termination of parental rights
- Any use of a social worker, parent partner, investigator, or expert
- Attendance at out of court meetings such as child and family team meetings

- Number of hours spent on each case
- Frequency and type of visitation/family time

These data points will be used to compare interdisciplinary representation with traditional representation in the following areas:

- Compliance with statutory timelines for hearings
- Days in out-of-home placement (number of days)
- Permanency outcomes (reunification, living with kin, adoption)

The Office of the Parent Defender is providing ongoing review of the program to identify successes as well as opportunities for continual improvement.

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## Appendix



## **A. IPR Program Application**

### **Request for Application Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program**

#### **About the Office of the Parent Defender:**

The Office of the Parent Defender (OPD) was created by the North Carolina’s Commission on Indigent Defense Services on March 2, 2018. OPD provides and promotes high quality legal representation for indigent parents affected by the child welfare system (DSS).

#### **About the Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program:**

Dependency and neglect proceedings in child welfare have high stakes and can have long-lasting impacts for children and families. Since these proceedings can result in children being removed from their families and even the termination of parental rights, it is imperative to provide effective legal representation. Emerging research has shown that adding social workers to create interdisciplinary legal defense teams in child welfare cases improves legal representation and leads to better outcomes for children and parents (Darnel & Bassett, 2019).

OPD is initiating an interdisciplinary parent representation program for North Carolina. Contract social workers will be paired with parent attorneys to provide legal representation to parents involved in a child welfare case. Social workers will help promote parent engagement, understanding of the child welfare process, and connection to services tailored to the individual needs of the parent. With this program, North Carolina seeks to improve legal representation, reduce time in foster care, and achieve permanency faster.

OPD is partnering with NC’s Court Improvement Program to bring this model of parent representation to North Carolina. Additionally, a Program Advisory Committee has been meeting regularly with representation from county and state DSS, county and state GAL, parent attorneys, judges, and parents who have personal experience with the child welfare system. The Advisory Committee has provided their expertise to OPD to ensure this new model of parent representation is successfully implemented.

#### **Applying to participate in the IPR Program**

OPD will accept applications from parent attorney bars to participate in the program<sup>1</sup>. Expansion of the program to new counties/districts is contingent on available funding.

Each county’s parent bar should select a parent attorney who will complete the application and be the contact person for the application process.

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<sup>1</sup> Large counties that are selected may be asked to limit the program to a percentage of the parent bar, a geographic district, or other natural division.

### APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Complete Application: Each county's parent bar should select a parent attorney who will complete the application and be the contact person for the application process. The application must be completed and submitted to the Office of the Parent Defender before it will be considered.
  - a. Application form and attachments: The application is part of this document and should be completed in full. Answer all questions. If additional space is required, use an attachment for your response and indicate on the application "see attachment."
  - b. Parent Attorney Signature Page: All parent attorneys interested in participating in the program should sign the signature page. OPD reserves the right to limit the number of attorneys participating in the program, regardless of signature or lack of signature.
  - c. Court Partner Signature Page: Signatures by court partners are strongly encouraged.
- 2) Application submission: Scan and email the complete application form, any attachments, and signature pages to Wendy Sotolongo, Parent Defender ([Wendy.C.Sotolongo@nccourts.org](mailto:Wendy.C.Sotolongo@nccourts.org)).
- 3) Interview: The Parent Defender may require an interview or the submission of additional information before a final decision is made on the application.
- 4) Notification: Once the completed application is reviewed and a decision is made, the applicant will be notified of the Parent Defender's decision by email.

\* This form has data saving enabled for Acrobat Reader.

\* If you have any difficulties filling out or saving this application, please contact Kate Warren at [kathryn.e.warren@nccourts.org](mailto:kathryn.e.warren@nccourts.org)

**INTERDISCIPLINARY PARENT REPRESENTATION PROGRAM APPLICATION, page 1**

- 1) Please answer the following:
- a. County applying for the IPR Program:
    - i. Designated Applicant's Name:
    - ii. Email:
    - iii. Telephone Number:
  - b. What types of communication/collaboration exist between parent attorneys in your county? (Check all that apply)
    - Regular meetings
    - Meetings as needed
    - Email group or listserv
    - Informal system - no parent bar meetings
    - other:
  - c. What types of non-case related communication/collaboration exist between parent attorneys, DSS, GAL, and Judges in your county? (Check all that apply)
    - Permanency collaborative meetings
    - Juvenile Rules committee - regular meetings
    - Juvenile Rules committee - meets as needed
    - Email group or listserv
    - Informal system - no established meetings
    - other:
  - d. Tell us about any experience you have with interdisciplinary representation, how you think it will help the legal representation in your county and why you would like to be a part of this program:



**INTERDISCIPLINARY PARENT REPRESENTATION PROGRAM APPLICATION, page 2**

- e. Are parent attorneys in your county willing to enter a contract with Indigent Defense Services that includes the following terms<sup>2</sup>:
  - i. Instead of submitting fee applications to the judge, attorneys will submit their hours each month to OPD and be paid for their hours based on the prevailing private assigned counsel (PAC) rates.
    - 1. Attorneys will input limited case information and their hours worked each month in an on-line database, and IDS will pay them for the previous month's work. Attorneys will also be paid for out-of-office-county travel and other allowable expenses, consistent with IDS policy.
  - ii. The attorney will obtain and maintain professional liability insurance with a minimum of \$100,000 per claim and \$300,000 annual aggregate.
  - iii. The social worker will be an integral part of the parent defense team and the attorney will regularly submit applications for social worker services.
  - iv. Concerns by the attorney and concerns brought by others about the program will be brought to the attention of OPD expeditiously.
- f. Successful implementation of the program will require initial training, court community meetings and ongoing collaboration.
  - i. Each parent attorney participating in the program and all contract social workers will attend a two-hour training. Participants will meet in their own county with the trainers and OPD.

*<sup>2</sup> If an attorney in a selected county is already under a parent attorney contract, the attorney will be expected to enter into an IRP Program contract.*

Does the applicant's team agree to participate as outlined in e and f above?

YES       NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature by Parent Attorney Designee  
*A typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print

**INTERDISCIPLINARY REPRESENTATION PROGRAM APPLICATION  
PARENT ATTORNEY SIGNATURES  
(Duplicate or copy as needed for all signatures)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** *a typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** *a typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** *a typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** *a typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** *a typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** *a typed name above indicates an electronic signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your name – please print



**INTERDISCIPLINARY PARENT REPRESENTATION PROGRAM APPLICATION COURT  
PARTNERS' SIGNATURES**

I am aware of the parent defense bar's interest in participating in the Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program, a collaboration between Indigent Defense Services' Office of the Parent Defender and the Administrative Office of the Court's Court Improvement Program and supported by the NC Division of Social Services and the NC Guardian ad litem program.

I am also aware that, to successfully implement the IPR Program in our county, there must be communication between all court partners about the Program. I am aware there will be an one-hour Webinar Orientation for the court partners in our county.

By my signature, I support the application of our county's parent defense bar's application and agree to attend (or secure the attendance of another) at the Webinar Orientation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**District Court Judge Signature** *or type name to sign digitally* \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Elected Clerk Signature** *or type name to sign digitally* \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DSS Director Signature** *or type name to sign digitally* \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DSS Attorney Signature** *or type name to sign digitally* \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**GAL Administrator Signature** *or type name to sign digitally* \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**GAL Attorney Advocate Signature** *or type name to sign digitally* \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

B. Application for Social Work Services

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Attorney Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Information

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Race:  American Indian or Alaska Native  Asian  Black or African American  Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  White  Other

Language Interpretation Services Needed:  No  Yes, Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Client's Address, Email and Phone Number:

Client's relationship to child(ren):  Mother  Father  Guardian  Custodian  Caretaker

Date Petition Filed and All File Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Allegation Type:  Abuse  Neglect  Dependency

You must scan and attach the following: • Petition • Adjudication and/or Disposition Order (if completed)

Next Hearing Date and Type of Hearing: \_\_\_\_\_

Current DSS Social Worker Name/Email/Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_ Same as petition

Please describe why you are requesting Social Work Assistance (optional):

[Empty text box for describing why you are requesting Social Work Assistance]

# CASE ASSIGNMENT-STEP BY STEP

1

Attorney sends application with attachments (petition and any orders) to IRP Program Manager via email

2

Program Manager reviews application and makes provisional appointment of IRP SW

Program Manager sends standard "New Case assignment" email to SW and Attorney with attachments

IRP Social Worker confirms via email that there are no known conflicts and they are accepting the case

3

4

Attorney lets client know that SW will be contacting client. Attorney clarifies services are voluntary and declining to participate in program will not impact the attorney client relationship.

5

Attorney and IRP SW meet for case staffing

Attorney files and serves Notice of Assignment

7

IRP SW emails IRP consent form to Program Manager and attorney

6

SW meets with client and obtains written consent for IRP services, discuss allegations in petition, discuss client's goal for case, obtains release for DSS, and obtains release for other providers/records

9

8

#### D. Assignment Email

Good morning [Insert Social Worker's Name],

You have been assigned the [Client's Name] case. Please confirm that you are able to take the case and that to your knowledge, you have no conflicts that would prevent the assignment.

If you accept the case assignment, the assigned attorney is [Attorney's Name]. Please find the attached petition and Appointment Packet which includes the Assignment Checklist, Consent for Release of Records, and the Consent to SW Services. These three documents will need to be sent to me once they are complete and signed. Please also keep a copy for yourself in the client file that you make.

Please reach out to the parent client and [Attorney's Name] within 5 business days to set up initial appointments. If you have any questions or need additional information, please don't hesitate to ask.

Best,

**Sharice J. Zachary, MSW | Social Worker- Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program Manager**  
NC Office of Indigent Defense Services | Office of the Parent Defender  
123 W. Main Street, Suite 308  
Durham, NC 27701  
919-354-7230

Attachments:

- Assignment Checklist
- Consent for Release of Records
- Consent to SW Services
- IRP Services Application
- Petition and or Latest Court Order

### E. Assignment Checklist

*\*Tasks should be completed within the first 5 business days of receiving the case.*

**Social Worker:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Review Copy of Petition (attached)
- Make Initial Contact with Client and Schedule First Meeting
- At Meeting:
  - Obtain written consent for IRP services from parent
  - Discuss allegations in petition/terms of last court order
  - Discuss parent's goals for case
  - Obtain signed copies of release of records
- Send Signed Consent form for IRP Services to Program Manager (Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org)
- Make Initial Contact with Attorney and Schedule First Case Staffing
- Set Up Client Record (Electronic and/or Paper File)
- Contact DSS Social Worker
  - Obtain date of next scheduled DSS Visitation Between Parent Client and Child/ren
  - Obtain Date of Next Child and Family Team Meeting, if scheduled
- Obtain Current Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement (DSS 5240) and NC Family Time and Contact Plan (DSS 5242) from DSS
- Contact GAL Volunteer

Additional Notes:

## F. Written Consent for Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program Services

The Office of the Parent Defender’s Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program aims to enhance the quality of legal representation for parents in abuse, neglect and dependency cases by adding experienced social workers to the legal defense team.

The social workers are not part of the Department of Social Services. They are under contract with the Office of the Parent Defender and work with attorneys appointed to represent parents.

### **Purpose of Social Worker Services**

The purpose of IPR social workers is to empower and advocate for parents and their families by providing high quality, strengths-based, compassionate, and comprehensive social work services to parents navigating abuse, neglect and dependency cases in North Carolina.

### **Social Worker Roles and Responsibilities**

As part of a legal team led by the appointed attorney, IPR social workers help parents understand the child welfare process, ensure appropriate services are provided to the parent, and support parents in achieving their goals in the case.

### **Confidentiality**

Conversations between a parent and their attorney are confidential and protected by the attorney-client relationship. The IPR social worker is part of the attorney’s team and required to keep conversations confidential. The only exception to this confidentiality is mandated reporting: if the IPR social worker receives information that the parent’s child is currently abused, neglected, or dependent, the IPR social worker must make a report to the director of the Department of Social Services.

### **Voluntary Status**

Participation in the IPR Program is voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating or for ending participation in the IPR Program.

### **Client Rights**

Parents receiving services from the IPR Program have certain rights according to the Office of the Parent Defender’s policies, North Carolina law, and federal law. As a participant, you have the following rights:

- You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity by your IPR social worker.
- You have the right to privacy regarding your person or property.
- You have the right to confidentiality. The information you share with the IPR social worker is confidential (except for mandated reporting noted above).
- You have the right to terminate IPR social worker services at any time.
- You have the right to make a complaint regarding any dissatisfaction with IPR services you receive. To make a complaint or if you have concerns about your rights, contact the Office of the Parent Defender at 919-354-7320 or [Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org](mailto:Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org).

### **The Attorney-Client Relationship**

A parent’s decision on whether to receive services from an IPR social worker has no impact on the parent’s relationship with their appointed attorney. The parent does not have the right to end the relationship with the appointed attorney; only a court can do this.

### **Consent**

I have read and understand the above and give my consent to be served by the IPR Program:

---

Full Name

Date



G. Consent for Release of Information

**Consent for Release of Confidential Information Form**

**Authorization for Disclosure of Information**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize  
\_\_\_\_\_ to disclose protected information

(Provider of Confidential Information)

to the Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program.

**(Initial each category applicable to IPR client representation)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ My name and other personal identifying information
- \_\_\_\_\_ All medical records
- \_\_\_\_\_ Substance use records, including treatment and diagnoses
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mental health records, including treatment plans and diagnoses
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assessments \_\_\_\_\_ (specify type, if necessary)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dates that services were provided
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recommendations for treatment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Progress notes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Progress and compliance with treatment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Date of discharge and discharge status
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discharge plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ All educational records, including those otherwise covered by FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

This otherwise confidential information will be used for the purpose of working with IPR to enhance the quality of legal representation provided.

**For parents/clients with substance use records:** I understand that my records are protected under the federal regulations governing Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Records, 42 CFR Part 2, and cannot be disclosed without my written consent unless otherwise provided for in the regulations. I also understand that, except for action already taken, I may revoke this consent at any time.

**For parents/clients with mental health records:** I understand the contents to be released, the need for the information, and that there are statutes and regulations protecting the confidentiality of authorized information. I also understand that, except for action already taken, I may revoke this consent at any time.

**Protected health information:** I understand that my health information is protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), 45 C.F.R. pts 160 & 164, but once this information is disclosed pursuant to this form, it may no longer be protected by HIPAA and further redisclosure may occur. I also understand that I may revoke this consent in writing at any time except to the extent that action has been taken in reliance on the consent.

If I do not revoke this consent, it expires automatically as follows:

1. **Upon closure of court case; or**
2. **One year from the date this consent is signed; whichever occurs first.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date signed

\_\_\_\_\_ Client's signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Client has received a copy of this consent form for his/her records.

\_\_\_\_\_ County

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

*Name of Juvenile(s)*

*Name of Client*

**NOTICE OF ASSIGNMENT  
OF INTERDISCIPLINARY  
PARENT REPRESENTATION  
PROGRAM SOCIAL WORKER**

**Assignment of IRP Social Worker**

*Name of Assigned IRP Program Social Worker (SW)*

*Name of Attorney*

*Email*

*Email*

*Phone*

*Phone*

The Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program was developed by the Office of the Parent Defender and Indigent Defense Services of North Carolina. The IPR Program aims to enhance the quality of legal representation in child welfare proceedings by adding social workers to the legal defense team. Contract social workers assigned to support an attorney are under the supervision of the attorney as a "NonLawyer Assistant" under Rule 5.3 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct.

**27 N.C.A.C. CHAPTER 2-RULE 5.3-RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING NONLAWYER ASSISTANTS**

With respect to a nonlawyer employed or retained by or associated with a lawyer:

- (a) a principal, and a lawyer who individually or together with other lawyers possesses comparable managerial authority in a law firm or organization shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the firm or organization has in effect measures giving reasonable assurance that the nonlawyer's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer;
- (b) a lawyer having direct supervisory authority over the nonlawyer shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the nonlawyer's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer; and
- (c) a lawyer shall be responsible for conduct of such a nonlawyer that would be a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct if engaged in by a lawyer if:
  - (1) the lawyer orders or, with the knowledge of the specific conduct, ratifies the conduct involved; or
  - (2) the lawyer is a principal or has comparable managerial authority in the law firm or organization in which the person is employed, or has direct supervisory authority over the nonlawyer, and knows of the conduct at a time when its consequences can be avoided or mitigated but fails to take reasonable remedial action to avoid the consequences.

Date

*Name of Attorney (Type Or Print)*

*Signature of attorney*

**RELEASE OF ASSIGNED IRP SOCIAL WORKER**

Date

*Name of Attorney (Type Or Print)*

*Signature of Attorney*

\_\_\_\_\_ County

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Name(s) of Juvenile(s)

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**  
*(Notice of Assignment of Interdisciplinary  
Parent Representation Program Social  
Worker)*

I, the undersigned, certify that a copy of the Notice of Assignment of Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program Social Worker [OPD-IRP-1] has been served on the parties listed below pursuant to Rule 5 of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

*DSS Attorney - Method of Rule 5 Service used:*

- sending it to the attorney's e-mail address of record with the court in the case by 5:00 P.M. ET
- hand-delivery to the attorney or leaving it at the attorney's office with a partner or employee
- sending it to the attorney's office by a confirmed telefacsimile transmittal for receipt by 5:00 P.M.
- mailing it to the attorney's office

Name of DSS Attorney

Email or Fax # or Address

*GAL Attorney Advocate - Method of Rule 5 Service used:*

- sending it to the attorney's e-mail address of record with the court in the case by 5:00 P.M. ET
- hand-delivery to the attorney or leaving it at the attorney's office with a partner or employee
- sending it to the attorney's office by a confirmed telefacsimile transmittal for receipt by 5:00 P.M. ET
- mailing it to the attorney's office

Name of GAL Attorney Advocate

Email or Fax # or Address

*Other Party - Method of Rule 5 Service used:*

- sending it to the attorney's e-mail address of record with the court in the case by 5:00 P.M. ET
- hand-delivery to the attorney or leaving it at the attorney's office with a partner or employee
- sending it to the attorney's office by a confirmed telefacsimile transmittal for receipt by 5:00 P.M. ET
- mailing it to the attorney's office

Name of Other Party

Email or Fax # or Address

*Other Party - Method of Rule 5 Service used:*

- sending it to the attorney's e-mail address of record with the court in the case by 5:00 P.M. ET
- hand-delivery to the attorney or leaving it at the attorney's office with a partner or employee
- sending it to the attorney's office by a confirmed telefacsimile transmittal for receipt by 5:00 P.M. ET
- mailing it to the attorney's office

Name of Other Party

Email or Fax # or Address

*Other Party - Method of Rule 5 Service used:*

- sending it to the attorney's e-mail address of record with the court in the case by 5:00 P.M. ET
- hand-delivery to the attorney or leaving it at the attorney's office with a partner or employee
- sending it to the attorney's office by a confirmed telefacsimile transmittal for receipt by 5:00 P.M. ET
- mailing it to the attorney's office

Name of Other Party

Email or Fax # or Address

Date

Name of Attorney (type or print)

Signature of Attorney

## I. IPR Program Social Worker Contract Announcement

# Independent Contractor Social Worker Opportunity

## North Carolina's Office of the Parent Defender's Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program

Job Location: \_\_\_\_\_ County

Release Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIPTION

The Office of the Parent Defender (OPD) invites qualified applicants to apply for the position of Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program Contract Social Worker.

OPD is a state-wide office within Indigent Defense Services that was created to assist attorneys representing parents in abuse, neglect, and dependency (A/N/D) cases.

In OPD's Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program, contract social workers are paired with parent attorneys to provide legal representation to parents involved in an A/N/D case. Social workers help promote parent engagement, understanding of the child welfare process, and connection to services tailored to the individual needs of the parent. With this program, North Carolina seeks to enhance parent representation, reduce time in foster care, and achieve permanency faster.

The IPR contract social workers are part of the attorney's legal team as a "Nonlawyer Assistant" under Rule 5.3 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional and report directly to the assigned attorney on the case. Additionally, the contract social workers are provided with program support by the IPR Program Manager, an employee of OPD.

Part-time and full-time contract positions are available. Full-time contractors are expected to bill a maximum of 40 hours per week. Contractors are paid \$50 per hour and will be allowed to bill for mileage and other allowable expenses. Contractors are not agents or employees of the State of North Carolina and perform their duties solely as independent contractors.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

- Communicate with the attorney on an ongoing basis
- Facilitate and encourage parent engagement in their case
- Communicate with parent's support system
- Help find court-ordered services and other resources
- Advocate for and support parents at meetings
- Prepare parent for successful visitation/family time
- Collaborate with community and state agencies to help parents achieve their goals
- Perform other duties as requested by the attorney
- Submit timely and accurate monthly billing and data reports to OPD
- Attend meetings and trainings required by the IPR Program Manager

## **REQUIREMENTS**

- Education and Experience:
  - i. Master’s degree (MSW) from social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and one (1) year of social work experience, or
  - ii. Bachelor’s degree (BSW) from social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and two (2) years of social work or counseling experience, or
  - iii. Bachelor’s degree in human services field or related curriculum and three (3) years social work or counseling experience
- Valid driver’s license, proof of insurance, and access to a working vehicle
- A smart phone and laptop
- Professional liability insurance

## **ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES:**

OPD prefers:

- Knowledge of the North Carolina child welfare system, including policy, practice, and agency operations
- Clinical understanding of mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and family systems
- Excellent advocacy, communication, and clinical skills
- Commitment to social justice
- Demonstrated ability to work on a multidisciplinary team
- Self-directed organizational and time management skills
- Ability to establish collaborative working relationships with a variety of stakeholders
- Ability to travel

## **HOW TO APPLY:**

Candidates should submit a cover letter, a resume, and a list of three professional references to Sharice Zachary, MSW, Interdisciplinary Representation Program Manager, [Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org](mailto:Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org) by \_\_\_\_\_ . Only complete application packets will be reviewed. Successful applicants will be contacted to schedule an interview.

## J. Rules of Professional Conduct

### Responsibilities for Nonlawyer Assistants

With respect to a nonlawyer employed or retained by or associated with a lawyer:

- (a) a principle, and a lawyer who individually or together with other lawyers possesses comparable managerial authority in a law firm shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the firm has in effect measures giving reasonable assurance that the nonlawyer's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer;
- (b) a lawyer having direct supervisory authority over the nonlawyer shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the nonlawyer's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer; and
- (c) a lawyer shall be responsible for conduct of such a nonlawyer that would be a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct if engaged in by a lawyer if:
  - (1) the lawyer orders or, with the knowledge of the specific conduct, ratifies the conduct involved; or
  - (2) the lawyer is a principle or has comparable managerial authority in the law firm or organization in which the person is employed, or has direct supervisory authority over the nonlawyer, and knows of the conduct at a time when its consequences can be avoided or mitigated but fails to take reasonable remedial action.

#### *Comment*

[1] Paragraph (a) requires lawyers with managerial authority within a law firm or organization to make reasonable efforts to ensure that the firm has in effect measures giving reasonable assurance that nonlawyers in the firm and nonlawyers outside the firm who work on firm matters act in a way compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer. See Comment [6] to Rule 1.1 (retaining lawyers outside the firm) and Comment [1] to Rule 5.1 (responsibilities with respect to lawyers within a firm). Paragraph (b) applies to lawyers who have supervisory authority over such nonlawyers within or outside the firm. Paragraph (c) specifies the circumstances in which a lawyer is responsible for the conduct of such nonlawyers within or outside the firm that would be a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct if engaged in by a lawyer.

[2] Lawyers generally employ assistants in their practice, including secretaries, investigators, law student interns, and paraprofessionals. Such assistants, whether employees or independent contractors, act for the lawyer in rendition of the lawyer's professional services. A lawyer must give such assistants appropriate instruction and supervision concerning the ethical aspects of their employment, particularly regarding the obligation not to disclose information relating to representation of the client and should be responsible for their work product. The measures employed in supervising nonlawyers should take account of the fact that they do not have legal training and are not subject to professional discipline.

*Source: NC Bar Association, 2016*

## **K. Confidentiality of Information**

Rule 1.6 Confidentiality of Information:

A lawyer shall not reveal information acquired during the professional relationship with a client unless the client gives informed consent, the disclosure is impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation or the disclosure is permitted by paragraph (b). For the full text of the Rule, see source below.

Source: <http://www.ncbar.gov/for-lawyers/ethics/rules-of-professional-conduct/rule-16-confidentiality-of-information/>

### **1.01 Commitment to Clients**

Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients' interests are primary. However, social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may, on limited occasions, supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised. (Examples include when a social worker is required by law to report that a client has abused a child or has threatened to harm self or others.)

### **1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality**

(a) Social workers should respect clients' right to privacy. Social workers should not solicit private information from or about clients except for compelling professional reasons. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.

(b) Social workers may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent from a client or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of a client.

(c) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that social workers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or others. In all instances, social workers should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose; only information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made should be revealed.

(d) If social workers plan to disclose confidential information, they should (when feasible and to the extent possible) inform clients about the disclosure and the potential consequences prior to disclosing the information. This applies whether social workers disclose confidential information on the basis of a legal requirement or client consent. [Additional subsections not included]

Source: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English/Social-Workers-Ethical-Responsibilities-to-Clients>



## L. NC Mandated Reporting Law

N.C.G.S. §7B-301, Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment:

Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined N.C.G.S. §7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found.

- The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing.
- The reporter shall give their name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of the maltreatment.
- Any person who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case as required is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Source: [http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter\\_7B/GS\\_7B-301.pdf](http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_7B/GS_7B-301.pdf)

## M. Work and Caseload Guidelines

### Social Worker Contract Hour Distribution

#### Direct Client Service Hours

- a) Direct client service hours are defined as any professional social work activity conducted for the purpose of a specific client.
- b) Direct client service hours generally average 85% or more of the social worker's contracted monthly hours.
- c) Direct client service hours include the social worker's transportation time to and from in-person or attempted in-person contacts.

### Caseload Standards

#### Case Definitions

- a) A "case" is defined as any referral assignment from attorneys where social workers provide a total of three or more hours of direct client service. Social workers know and understand cases are counted as parents in neglect and dependency proceedings, and not children of parents.
- b) "Active status" cases are defined as open cases that have had at least one in person or telephone client contact in the last full calendar month.
- c) "Inactive status" cases are defined as open cases that have not had an in-person or telephone contact in the last full calendar month but remain open for anticipated future services. The lack of contact may be due to no recent contact being necessary or unsuccessful contacts attempts made by the social worker.
- d) "Closed" cases are defined as cases where there are no further court reviews scheduled or the attorney has withdrawn from the case.

*Source: Washington State Office of Public Defense, 2008, p. 21*

### Caseload Considerations

- a) It is important to work with the IPR Program Manager to manage caseload sizes. While there is not currently a recommended number for caseload size, the following should be taken into consideration:
  - a. Reasonable caseload sizes allow social workers to provide optimum services for current active cases.
  - b. Providing a defined catchment area for social workers helps manage caseload sizes by decreasing the amount of time spent driving between client meetings.
  - c. Contact frequency should also be taken into consideration when determining case assignments. Certain cases may require a high contact frequency at specific points in the process.

## **N. Training Guidelines**

IPR social workers and attorneys attend orientation training prior to beginning work on cases together.

This orientation should cover the following:

- Benefits of social worker and parent attorney partnerships
- Roles and responsibilities
- Relationships between parents/clients, attorneys, and social workers
- Rules of professional conduct
- Role of social workers in court proceedings
- Mandated reporting
- Collaboration with local child welfare agencies

In addition, court partners will be invited to attend an orientation training. Invitees include judges, county child welfare agency attorneys and staff, and GAL program attorneys, staff, and volunteers. This orientation should cover the following:

- Overview of the IPR Program
- Desired outcomes for North Carolina
- Roles and responsibilities
- Information sharing

Learning communities provide a structure for exploring the more nuanced and challenging aspects of interdisciplinary work through real life examples and interactive activities. Learning communities cover topics such as:

- Communication and learning style differences
- Social worker and lawyer strengths and needs
- Exploring the challenges of mandated reporting
- Overcoming common barriers to progress
- Using and maximizing the benefits of visitation/family time
- Cross-training about courtroom and child welfare basics
- Expanding knowledge in areas such as substance use, mental health, and interpersonal violence